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CREATION OF THE KHALSA AN EPOCH-MAKING EVENT IN THE WORLD HISTORY

Prof. (Dr.) Harnam Singh Shan

M.A. (Eng. & Pbi.) Ph.D. (London)

D. Litt. (P.U. Chandigarh)

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DR. S.S. NANDA
Secretary
Guru Nanak Dev Mission
Academy of Sikh Religion and Culture,
1, Dhillon Marg, Patiala
Phones :215704
214738

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-Prof. Dr. Harnam Singh Shan

An epoch-making event in the history of the world, in general and that of the Indian subcontinent, in particular, took place on Vaisakhi, 30th March 1699, at Anandpur Sahib, situated at the foot of the Shivalak Hills in the Indian State of The Punjab.

It was an event of such great significance that it changed the very course of history in a short time. It heralded the birth of "the democratic institution of the Khalsa, an astonishingly original and novel creation",¹ said Sri Aurobindo, whose "face was turned not to the past but to the future".² It ushered in a new phase in the annals of history, a new social order and a new value-pattern that marked the rise of a new and distinct people, destined to play the role of hero against aggression, oppression and tyranny.

It also signified the culmination of the divine mission of Guru Nanak Dev (1469-1539) and the fulfilment of the ideal set forth by him two centuries earlier, while initiating the Sikh faith during the rule of the Mughals in the Indian subcontinent.

The faith founded by him is an original, distinct and self-sustaining religion : dynamic, progressive and cosmopolitan in outlook as well as conducive to human welfare. Having the Eternal Truth as its source, it is a revealed and genuinely monotheistic religion which arose as a new mode of humanitarian thought, heralding a new concept, that of Ultimate Reality, and a new vision, that of the Universal Man. It is a practical and whole-life religious system which is based on the dual aspects of the temporal and spiritual concepts as well as on the principles

1. Aurobindo, Sri, Foundations of Indian Culture, Pondicherry-1959, pp.150-151.
2. Aurobindo, Sri, A Defence of Indian Culture, Religion and Spirituality, in The Arya, Vol. VI, No. 1-1920.

of active and full participation in life and total social responsibility, exhorting people to -

ਊਦਮੁ ਕਰੇਦਿਆ ਜੀਉ ਤੂ,
ਕਾਵਦਿਆ ਸੁਖ ਤੁੰਚਾ।
ਧਿਆਇਦਿਆ ਤੂੰ ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਮਿਲੁ,
ਨਾਨਕ ਉਤਸੀ ਰਿੰਤ।³

Live with zest and abode in joy
by doing hard and honest work.

Obtain Union with God
through meditation on the holy Name.

Thus you shall get rid of anxieties.³

Hence, says Prof. Bittencourt, "It is the only living faith that gives the healing outlook on life."

Sikhism is dedicated to the democratic and altruistic ideals of a casteless system, a classless society and the selfless service of mankind, believing that:

ਮਿਥਿਆ ਤਨ,
ਨਹੀਂ ਪਰਉਪਕਾਰਾ।⁴

The human body,
that does not do good to others,
is worthless.⁴

Cherishing thus a broad and liberal human base and challenging the division of mankind under various classifications, it has been preaching and practising universal brotherhood and equality of all human beings; and inculcating mutual understanding, respect and tolerance among persons of different creeds and callings, sex and status, colour and country according to its Founder's following gospel:

ਐ ਜੀ, ਨ ਹਮ ਉਤਸੁ, ਨੌਰ ਨ ਮਹਿਮ ;
ਹਰਿ ਸਰਣਾਗਤਿ ਹਰਿ ਕੇ ਲੋਗ।⁵

3. Arjan Dev. Guru (ed.) **Guru Granth Sahib**, Amritsar-1604. Rag Gujri. M.V.p.522.

4. Ibid. Rag Gauri, M.V.p.269.

5. Nanak Dev. **Guru, Guru Granth Sahib**, Amritsar-1604. Rag Gujri, M.I., p.504.

We, who have taken shelter with God,
are God's own people, O Friend.
We are neither high-caste, nor low-caste,
nor of the middling state.⁵

The authenticity of its doctrines, simplicity of its beliefs, excellence of its ethical system; emphasis on the truthful living; as well as the clarity and tenacity of the ultimate objective are some of the special features of Sikhism. These are reflected in the innate power, vibrant spirit, distinct appearance, sustained chivalry, self-sacrificing nature and glorious record of its followers, who seek God's blessings for the welfare of all mankind in their daily prayers in these very words;

ਤੇਰੇ ਤਾਂਦੇ
ਸਰਬਤ ਦਾ ਤਲਾ।⁶

May the entire mankind
Be blessed with peace and well-being.⁶

That is what seems to have led Bradshaw to acclaim Sikhism "the faith of the New Age the present Space Age..... a universal world faith with a message for all men.... The older faiths were good in their days but that is now past, and we are living in the dispensation of Guru Nanak (whose) spirit has revolutionised the world."⁷

Guru Nanak was followed by nine spiritual preceptors, called Gurus, in whose "changing bodies the same light and spirit permeated."

ਜੋਤਿ ਓਹਾ, ਜੁਗਤਿ ਸਾਇ,
ਸਹਿ ਕਾਇਆ ਫੇਰਿ ਪਲਟੀਐ।⁸

They projected "the same praxis" and disseminated his message of universal love, peace, harmony, morality, devoted service and self-sacrifice, reiterating his gospel couched in verses such as these :

6. **Ardas**, the Sikh Prayer, Last couplet.
7. Bradshaw, H.L., The Sikh Review, Calcutta-1959; Singh, Gurbakhsh, Sikhism : A Universal Message, Richardson-1991,p.8.
8. Rai Balwand & Satta Doom, Var, Guru Granth Sahib, op.cit., Rag Ramkali, p.966.

1. ਆਈ ਪੰਥੀ,

ਸਗਲ ਜਮਾਤੀ / 9

Let Universal Brotherhood be
The highest aspiration of your religious order.⁹

2. ਸਚੁਹੁ ਉਰੈ ਸਤ ਕੋ,

ਊਪਰਿ ਸਚੁ ਆਚਾਰੁ / 10

Truth is higher than everything else.
But higher by far is the living of truth.¹⁰

3. ਮਿਠੜ੍ਹ ਨਾਈ ਨਾਨਕਾ,

ਗੁਣ ਚੰਗਿਆਈਅਤ ਤਤੁ / 11

Sweetness and humility are
The essence of all virtues and good qualities.¹¹

4. ਮਰਣੁ ਮੁਟਸਾ ਸੁਰਿਆ ਹਕੁ ਹੈ,

ਜੋ ਹੋਇ ਮਰਨਿ ਪਰਵਾਣੇ / 12

Death is a privilege for the brave,
If they die for a noble cause.¹²

5. ਨ ਕੋ ਬੈਠੀ, ਨਹੀਂ ਬਿਗਾਨਾ,

ਸਗਲ ਸੰਗ ਹਮ ਕਉ ਬਨਿਆਈ / 13

None is our enemy
nor is anyone a stranger to us.¹³

6. ਵਿਚਿ ਦੁਨੀਆ ਸੇਵ ਕਮਾਈਐ,

ਤਾ ਦਰਗਹਿ ਬੈਸਣੁ ਪਾਈਐ / 14

A resting place at the Divine Portal
can be found only
Through the devoted service
of the people in this world.¹⁴

But the dynamic religio-social movement carried on by them for the spiritual reconstruction, moral regeneration and social amelioration of human kind gave rise to a strong hostility of the foreign Muslim rulers, native feudal lords, protagonists of the

9. **Guru Granth Sahib**, op.cit., **Jap Ji**, st.28, p.6.

10. Guru Nanak Dev, ibid, Rag Siri, p.62.

11. Ibid, Rag Asa, M.I., p.470.

12. Ibid, Rag Wadhans, M.I., p.579.

13. Arjan Dev, Sri Guru, Ibid, Rag Kanra, p.1299.

14. Ibid, Rag Siri.. M.I., p.26.

age-old caste-system and leaders of the special privileged classes. The Sikh Gurus and their followers had, therefore, to undergo untold sufferings, hardships, massacres, even repeated state attempts at their total extermination. So much so that the Fifth Master, Sri Guru Arjan Dev (1564-1606), and the Ninth, Guru Tegh Bahadur (1621-1675), who made such fervent appeals to the Creator of all for the welfare of all human beings:

ਸਤੇ ਜੀਅ ਸਮਾਲ,
ਅਪਣੀ ਮਿਹਰ ਕਰੁ।
ਅਨ ਪਾਣੀ ਮੁਚ ਉਪਾਇ,
ਦੁਖ ਦਾਲਦੁ ਭੰਨਿ ਤਰ।¹⁵

Be merciful, O Lord;
and keep all beings in your care.
Let grain and water be in plenty,
shatter their sufferings and penury.
And ferry them across
the Ocean of Existence.¹⁵

had to lay down their lives in 1606 at Lahore and in 1675 in Delhi under the specific orders of the then Mughal Emperors of India, Jahangir and Aurangzeb, respectively.

During the time of its Tenth and the last Master, Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708), the forces of tyranny, injustice, oppression and discrimination let loose by the then Mughal regime became so highly aggressive that it was considered essential to wreck them and protect the oppressed from their further onslaughts.

According to the following statement recorded under the caption, 'God's Utterance', in the Guru's autobiography, titled *Apni Katha*, the accomplishment of that noble objective and gigantic task was assigned to him by God Himself :

ਮੈਂ ਅਪਨਾ ਸੁਤਿ ਤੋਹਰ ਨਿਵਾਜਾ,
ਪੰਥੁ ਪ੍ਰਚੂਰ ਕਰਿ ਕਹ ਸਾਜਾ।
ਜਾਹਰ ਤਹਾਂ ਤੈ ਧਰਮੁ ਚਲਾਇ,
ਕਥਧਿ ਕਰਨ ਤੇ ਲੋਕ ਹਟਾਇ।¹⁶

15. Ibid. Rag Sarang. M.V., p.1251.

16. Gobind Singh. Sri Guru. ***Bachitar Natak***. Anandpur-1698, as included in ***Sri Dasam Granth Sahib***, ed. & annotated by Bhai Randhir Singh. Patiala-1985. ***Apni Katha***, p.73-74.

I have exalted you as My chosen son
 and have appointed you to found the order of Khalsa
 Go into the world,
 promote and spread true religion
 and turn the people away
 from senseless practices.¹⁶

Elaborating the mission so ordained, it is also stated thus in the Guru's own words :

ਹਮ ਇਹ ਕਾਜ ਜਗਤ ਮੇਂ ਆਏ,
 ਧਰਮ ਹੇਤੁ ਗੁਰਦੇਵਿ ਪਠਾਏ।
 ਜਹਾਂ ਤਹਾਂ ਤੁਮ ਧਰਮ ਬਿਖਰੋਂ,
 ਦੁਸ਼ਟ ਦੋਖੀਯਨਿ ਪਕਰਿ ਪਛਾਰੋਂ।
 ਧਾਰੀ ਕਾਜ ਧਰਾ ਹਮ ਜਨਮੀ,
 ਸਮਝ ਲੋਹੁ ਸਾਧੁ ਸਭ ਮਨਮੀ।
 “ਧਰਮ ਚਲਾਵਨ, ਸੰਤ ਉਬਾਰਨ,
 ਦੁਸ਼ਟ ਸਭਨ ਕੋ ਮੂਲ ਉਪਾਰਨ।”¹⁷

The Supreme Lord had sent me here
 to uphold Dharama (Righteousness).
 He had commanded me
 to spread true faith everywhere;
 and seize and smash the wicked and the tyrants...
 know it well in your hearts
 O pious people;
 "I have taken birth only for this purpose :
 to promulgate true religion,
 to exalt the virtuous,
 and to uproot the vicious."¹⁷

So, in order to fulfil that mission, Guru Gobind Singh decided to raise a national army of self-sacrificing saint-warriors, later called 'Akalpurkh Ki Fauj' (God's Own Legion). He, therefore, planned to inaugurate it in a very bold, spectacular and inspiring way so as to revolutionise the very thought and will of the people who had become so demoralised and terror-stricken that even the sight of a sword terrified them.

17. Ibid. Apni Katha, p.74.

Guru Gobind Singh fixed the Vaisakhi day of 1699 for that purpose and summoned his followers for its celebration at Anandpur Sahib. According to Syed Mohammad Latif, eighty thousand people, hailing from all directions and regions in the subcontinent and covering long and arduous journeys in those very hard and disturbed times, assembled there "in obedience to the command of the Guru."¹⁸

While delivering his sermon to them in Fort Kesgarh, Guru Gobind Singh suddenly unsheathed his sword, flourished it and thundered, "My sword is thirsty and needs today a head to quench its thirst for blood. Is there any devout Sikh present here who is willing to offer his head to me, right now, as a sacrifice for the sake of Dharma (righteousness)? That sudden, strange and stunning demand numbed the massive audience which was highly horrified and looked on in awed silence. It was, however, responded to soon after, and one Daya Ram, a Khatri from Lahore (now in Pakistan) rose, offered his head and walked behind the Guru into a tented enclosure. On four subsequent similar calls, with his sword dripping blood and his eyes shining like fire, the Guru thundered and asked them for more heads. Four more Sikhs came forward, one after the other, offered their heads for the supreme sacrifice and followed him in the same enclosure. The people could hear, each time, only a thud of the sword from that direction.

All of them belonged to different depressed classes and had arrived there from far-off places. Three of them came even from those 'low castes' which were considered 'untouchables' and were subjected to grave injustice, torture and humiliation down the ages. To be exact, they included Dharam Das, a jat from Hastinapur (Uttar Pradesh) in the north; Sahib Chand, a barber from Bidar (Karnataka) in the south; Mukham Chand, a calico-printer, from Dwarka (Gujarat) in the west; and Himmat Rai, a water-carrier, from Jagannathpuri (Orissa) in the east- indicating thus the national content of that vast congregation, representing

18. Latif, Syed Mohammad, History of the Punjab from the remotest antiquity to the present time, Calcutta-1891. p.263.

the whole spectrum of Indian Society and hailing from all directions and zones of the subcontinent.¹⁹ Fully satisfied after testing their heroic devotion, ready response and unquestioning offer for the supreme sacrifice in such a righteous cause enjoined, as follows, by Guru Nanak :

ਜਉ ਰਉ ਪ੍ਰਮ ਬੇਲਣ ਕਾ ਚਾਉ,
ਸਿਰੁ ਧਰਿ ਤਲੈ ਗਲੀ ਮੇਰੀ ਆਉ ।
ਇਤੁ ਮਾਰਗ ਪੈਂਤੁ ਧਰੀਜੈ,
ਸਿਰੁ ਦੌਜੈ ਕਾਣਿ ਨ ਕੀਜੈ ।²⁰

If you are keen to play the Game of Love,
step into my street,

with your head placed on your palm.

Having thus set your foot upon it,

lay down your head without any fear or grudge,²⁰
the Guru put a stop to further calls.

The horror and suspense of the people turned into wonder and amazement when Guru Gobind Singh led the five back to the assemblage, not only alive but also hale and hearty, radiant and inspiring. When they emerged following their Master, gorgeously dressed alike with glittering swords dangling by their sides, they looked strangely like him to whom they had given their heads and he, in turn, had given them his self and glory.²¹

In order to initiate them and administer to them the vows of baptism in an unheard-of manner to mark their rebirth in the New Order, the Guru prepared a unique elixer, called **Amrit** (nectar of immortality), churning the clean water of the river **Sutlej** in a steel bowl with a steel **Khanda** (double-edged broadsword) and reciting over it five **Gurbanis** (sacred texts) to

19. Koer Singh. Bhai. **Gurbilas Patshahi 10**. Amritsar-1751, canto 9; ed. by S.Shamsher Singh Ashok, Patiala-19, pp.127-29.

20. Guru Nanak Dev, **Guru Granth Sahib**, op. cit., slok, p.1412.

21. See Kaushish Bhai Sarup Singh Bhatt, **Guru Kian Sakhian**, Sakhi no.58; "Offer of heads by Five Sikhs, Bhadson-1790; ed. by Giani Garja Singh & S.Piara Singh Padam, Patiala-1986, pp. 111-13; Sukha Singh Bhai, **Gurbilas Patshahi 10**, Anandpur-1797, ch.12; ed. by Dr.Gursharan Kaur Jaggi, Patiala-1989, pp.173-74.

sanctify it. His blessed wife, Mata Jito Ji, poured in it a lapful of patasas (sugar-puffs) to sweeten the sanctified water with the milk of human kindness. When that Nectar, called Khanda di Pahul, prepared thus by mingling sweetness with the grace of the Word Divine and alchemy of Steel and his own exalted spirits dissolved in it, became ready he gave to each, by turns, five palmfuls of it to drink, making them repeat after him a new salutation : Whiguru Ji Ka Khalsa, Wahiguru Ji Ki Fateh (Khalsa belongs to God and His is the final victory). He also sprinkled it over each one's face and anointed as well their hair with it.²² He did all that to foster in them love, compassion, valour, dignity and harmony. And he administered it to them in such a novel and enthusing way that it signified their initiation into an altogether New Order.

Announcing a complete break from their past, initiating them into a new casteless society and designating it the Khalsa Panth, he called them Wahiguru Ji Ka Khalsa (God's Elect) and his own Panji Piyare (Beloved Five). In order to ensure that 'they remain distinguished from the rest of the world', he addressed them as Bhais (brothers); changed the suffixes of their previous names; surnamed them with a common appellation, Singh (Lion); and prescribed a common conspicuous uniform consisting of five defining emblems which gave the Khalsa a distinct identity and semblance of unity and equality, becoming later the hallmark of the Sikhs - easily recognisable any time any where by their attire and appearance.²³

Enforcing a vigorous application of the principles originally expounded by Guru Nank Dev, the Founder, Guru Gobind Singh enjoined them to worship none but God and consider all persons equal :

22. Kaushish, Guru Kian Sakhian, Sakhi no.59. Ibid, p.114.

23. Sainapat, Chander Sen, Sri Gur Sobha, Wazirabad-1711, chs.5-6; ed. by Dr. Ganda Singh, Patiala-1980, pp.22&32; Kaushish, Guru Kian Sakhian, op.cit., Sakhi no.59 : Initiation by Nectar of the Double-edged Broadsword, ed. pp.113-15.

ਮਾਨਸ ਦੀ ਜਾਤਿ ਸਾਡੀ ਏਕੈ ਪਹਚਾਨਦੇ.....,
ਏਕ ਗੇ ਸ਼ੁਦਾਪ ਸਾਡੇ, ਏਕੈ ਜਾਤਿ ਜਾਨਦੇ।²⁴

Recognise all humanity
as one in spirit.

And all human beings manifestation of
One Divine Form and One Divine Light.²⁴

He also exhorted them to be pure and true' in thought, word and deed'; to live upto the highest moral and ethical standards; to succour the needy and help the helpless; and to be ever ready to fight tyranny, oppression and injustice.

Pronouncing their rejuvenation in the new fraternity, they were enjoined to regard themselves as brothers and sisters to one another, obliterating all disparities, differentiations and discriminations based on caste, calling, colour, country, race or gender, etc. Laying down also some specific injunctions for their personal conduct, he forbade the cutting and trimming of hair, chewing or smoking of tobacco, committing of adultery and eating of meat of an animal slaughtered slowly in the Muslim way.²⁵

Declaring the Select Five to be the nucleus of the New Order, the Khalsa Commonwealth, Guru Gobind Singh, then, himself stood up before them and besought to be baptised likewise and admitted to its fold and included in their Brotherhood. This stunned not only them but the whole congregation as well. "You being our Master and Initiator and we being your disciples and initiated ones, how can we.....?", they exclaimed. The Guru explained, "It is a new form of baptism which recognises no high and low. I am establishing this new fraternity on the basis of complete equality by asking to become your disciple and merge thereby into its Fellowship. As I am your Guru, you collectively should be my Guru. I, therefore, beg to be admitted into its fold in the very same manner." They hesitatingly agreed. In the words of Bhai Santokh Singh, he then added :

24. Gobind Singh, Sri Guru, Sri Dasam Granth Sahib, p.28; Akal Ustat, st.15/8.

25. Kaushish, Guru Khan Sakhian, op.cit., Sakhi no.60 : code of conduct and conventions'; ed. pp.115-16.

ਖਾਲਸਾ ਹੁਕੂ ਹੈ, ਹੁਕੂ ਖਾਲਸਾ ਕਰੋ ਮੈਂ ਅਥਿ:
 ਜੈਸੇ ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕ ਜੀ ਅੰਗਦ ਕੇ ਕੀਨਿਓ।
 ਬੰਕ ਨ ਕਰੋਜੇ, ਸਾਵਧਾਨ ਹੋਇ ਦੀਜੈ ਅਥਿ,
 ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਛਕਾਵੇ ਮੁਹਿ, ਜੈਸੇ ਤੁਮ ਲੀਨਿਓ।²⁶

The Khalsa is the Guru

and I, as Guru Nanak did, now proclaim it to be so,
 by proclaiming Angad as such.

Have no doubt about it,

buck up and give this Nectar to me
 without any further hesitation.

Administer it to me, precisely in the same way
 as I had administered it to you.²⁶

The blessed Five then prepared the Nectar of Steel in the same
 unheard of manner, administered it to him in the same way and
 changed his name too from 'Guru Gobind Das' to Guru Gobind
 Singh', much to the utter amazement of all, one of whom
 exclaimed :

ਵਾਰ ਵਾਰ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਸਿੰਘ
 ਆਪੇ ਗੁਰ ਚੇਲਾ।²⁷

Hail, O hail Guru Gobind Singh,
 who himself is the Master
 and also the disciple,
 at the same time.²⁷

When initiated, he declared :

Khalsa Guru se, aur Guru Khalsa se hoe;
 Ek dusre ke tabedor hoe.

meaning that 'The Khalsa arose from the Guru
 and the Guru from the Khalsa.

They are the mutual
 protectors of each other.²⁸

26. Santokh Singh Bhai, Gur Partap Suraj Granth, Kaithal-1843,
 rul 3, ansu 20, sl.6; Suraj Parkash Granthavali, ed. by Bhai
 Vir Singh, Amritsar, 1927-35, vol. IV, p.2530.

27. Gurdas Singh, Bhai, Var Ramkali Patshahi Daswin Ki,
 sl.15.

28. Latif, History of Punjab, op.cit.,pp.262-263.

Never before in the history of the world a Master has been known to have turned himself into a disciple of his own initiated ones, considered them superior to himself, besought their favour thus, sat at their feet, got himself initiated that very way at their hands and merged his entity with his self-created community, claiming no higher privileges than those he had bestowed upon them. Guru Gobind Singh also interchanged, thereby, his august position with the collectivity of his disciples, that is the Khalsa Fraternity, as one entity. He "enunciated thus", says Dr. Hari Ram Gupta, "the principles of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity which ninety years earlier formed the bedrock of the French Revolution."²⁹ According to Sir Arnold Toynbee, he anticipated Lenin by two centuries by infusing democratic spirit and temper in his people.³⁰ He similarly anticipated, thereby, two and a half centuries earlier, the ideals, intentions and aspirations of the United Nations, as proclaimed on 26 June 1945, reaffirming "faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human beings, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small;" establishing "conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations can be maintained"; and "promoting social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom."³¹ So much so that the cardinal principles on which Guru Gobind Singh based that 'New and Novel Order' are the same which also formed the basis of the Preamble of the constitution of the free India, adopted and enacted on 26 November 1949, resolving "to constitute India into a Sovereign Democratic Republic and to secure to all its citizens Justice, Liberty, Equality and Fraternity."³²

29. Gupta, Hari Ram, History of the Sikhs, vol.I, New Delhi-1984, p.282.
30. Toynbee, Sir Arnold, A Study of History, Abridgement, Oxford-1960; London-1977. p.748.
31. United Nations' Charter, Preamble, United Nations Organisation, signed at San Francisco on 26 June1945. See Everyman's United Nations, U.N.O., New York, 7th ed.-1964, p.1.
32. See The Constitution of India, Preamble, as adopted and enacted by the Constituent Assembly of India on 26 November 1949 at New Delhi.

This has been so because Guru Gobind Singh believed and proclaimed on that very day:

ਮਨਸ ਸਬੈ ਏਕ, ਪੈ ਅਨੇਕ ਕੋ ਭੁਮਾਉ ਹੈ
 ਨਿਆਰੇ ਨਿਆਰੇ ਦੇਸਨ ਕੇ, ਭੇਸ ਕੋ ਪ੍ਰਭਾਉ ਹੈ।
 ਏਕੈ ਨੈਨ, ਏਕੈ ਕਾਨ, ਏਕੈ ਦੇਹ, ਏਕੈ ਬਾਨ,
 ਬਾਕ, ਬਾਦ, ਆਤਿਸ਼, ਅੰ ਆਬ ਕੋ ਰਲਾਉ ਹੈ।.....
 ਏਕ ਹੀ ਸਰੂਪ ਸਬੈ, ਏਕ ਹੀ ਬਨਾਉ ਹੈ।³³

All persons are the same all over
 though each has a different appearance
 under different local influences
 and environments of different countries.....

All have the same eyes, the same ears,
 the same body and the same build,
 compounded of the same elements:
 earth, air, fire and water....

They are all alike, all of one form,
 as the One Immortal God has made all of them.³³

Such an unprecedented 'submission', 'identification' and 'merger' of the Master's own entity with the self-created community, at his own asking, electrified the atmosphere to such an extent that, according to the report dated 16 April 1699 of the newswriter of the Mughal court, said to be then present there, "twenty thousand persons accepted the Guru's gospel and pledged to act upon it."³⁴

Guru Gobind Singh established the New Order on the equalitarian basis, on social justice, on the truly socialistic and democratic principles, according to which all its adherents were to be co-equal members of the Khalsa Fraternity, giving Sikhism thereby "a democratic orientation of the most modern form

33. Sri Guru Gobind Singh. Dasam Granth Sahib, op.cit.,p.28; Akal Ustat, op.cit.,st.16/86.

34. Batalia, Ahmed Shah. Twarikh-i-Hind, Batala-1818, unpublished; Khalsa College, Amritsar MSS.no.Persian/1291, f.377; Bute Shah (Ghulam Muahi-ud-Din). Tarikh-i-Punjab, Ludhiana-1848, unpublished Khalsa College, Amritsar, MSS.No.Persian 1288, ff.405-06; Suri, Munshi Sohan Lal. Umdat-ut-Twarikh, Lahore-1880, vol.I, appendix, p.5.

amongst the religions of the world.³⁵ Baptising them in such a novel and inspiring way and treating them in that unheard-of manner, he brought a revolutionary change in their minds and aroused their dormant energies to positive, constructive and altruistic purposes.

Guru Gobind Singh poured his own life, soul and spirit in them, so much so that he publicly declared that:

ਖਾਲਸਾ ਮੇਰੇ ਕੂਪ ਹੈ ਖਾਸ,
ਖਾਲਸੇ ਮਹਿ ਹਉਂ ਕਰਹੁ ਨਿਵਾਸ।.....
ਖਾਲਸਾ ਮੇਰੇ ਇਸ਼ਟ ਸੁਹਿਰਦ,
ਖਾਲਸਾ ਮੇਰੇ ਕਹੀਅਤ ਬਿਰਦ।.....
ਖਾਲਸਾ ਮੇਰੇ ਪਿੰਡ ਪਰਾਨ,
ਖਾਲਸਾ ਮੇਰੇ ਜਾਨ ਕੀ ਜਾਨ।.....
ਖਾਲਸਾ ਅਕਾਲਪੁਰਖ ਕੀ ਛੰਜ,
ਪ੍ਰਗਟਯੋ ਖਾਲਸਾ ਪਰਮਾਤਮ ਕੀ ਮੰਜ।³⁶

The Khalsa is exactly like me.

I ever abide in the Khalsa.....

The Khalsa is my beloved ideal,

The Khalsa is my other self

The Khalsa is my body and soul,

The Khalsa is the life of my life.....

The Khalsa is God's Own Legion,

The Khalsa has manifested at God's pleasure.³⁶

He not only breathed new life into a crushed and broken people, he not only inspired the common depressed folk with lofty ideals and great aspirations but also glorified their innate strength and democratic will long before Rousseau wrote his Social Contract and Marx formulated his Communist Manifesto. He went to the extent of not only describing them as the source of all that he achieved or possessed but also gave the entire credit of his achievements and attainments only to them to his humblest

35. Harbans Singh, Prof., Guru Gobind Singh, Chandigarh-1966, p.169.

36. Guru Gobind Singh (ascribed to). Sri Sarbloh Granth, Anandpur-1698(c.); Budha Dal edition, Anandpur-1970, vol.III, pp.531-32, st.3309.

disciples whom he had uplifted from the lowest rung of the social order. Addressing a caste-ridden and status-conscious arrogant Brahmin, Pandit Kesho, he stated most unambiguously :

ਜੁੱਧ ਜਿਤੇ ਇਨ੍ਹੀ ਕੇ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ,
 ਇਨ੍ਹੀ ਕੇ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ਸੁ ਦਾਨ ਕਰੇ ।
 ਆਧ ਅਉਧ ਟਰੇ ਇਨ੍ਹੀ ਕੇ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ,
 ਇਨ੍ਹੀ ਕੀ ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾ ਛੁਨ ਧਾਮ ਭਰੇ ।
 ਇਨ੍ਹੀ ਕੇ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ਸੁ ਬਿਦਿਆ ਲਈ,
 ਇਨ੍ਹੀ ਕੀ ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾ ਸਭ ਸੜ ਮਰੇ ।
 ਇਨ੍ਹੀ ਕੀ ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾ ਕੇ ਸਜੇ ਹਮ ਹੈ,
 ਨਹੀਂ ਸੋ ਸੋ ਗਰੀਬ ਕਰੋਰ ਪਰੇ ।³⁷

It is through the loving grace of these very people
 that I have won all my battles.

It is because of their benevolence
 that I have dispensed charity (to the deserving).

It is through their favour and help
 that I have overcome my sufferings and travails.

It is because of their loving grace
 that there is fullness in my house.

It is through their favour again
 that I have acquired knowledge and learning.

It is because of their grace and help
 that I have vanquished all my enemies.

It is through their favour and grace
 that I am now what I am.

Otherwise, there are millions of lowly ones like me
 lying around uncared for.³⁷

Continuing with this incomparable song, written solely in praise and gratitude of the people around the close of the seventeenth century, Guru Gobind Singh expressed his unshakable faith in their power and goodness, and also proclaimed that whatever he possessed and called his own he had already dedicated that to those very people:

37. Guru Gobind Singh. Sri Dasam Granth Sahib. op.cit., Swaiye Patshahi 10. st.2, p.716.

ਸੇਵ ਕਰੀ ਇਨ੍ਹੀ ਕੀ ਭਾਵਤ,
ਅਉਰ ਕੀ ਸੇਵ ਸੁਹਾਤ ਨ ਜੀ ਕੇ।.....
ਹੋ ਗਿਆ ਹੈ, ਤਨ ਤੇ, ਮਨ ਤੇ,
ਸਿਰ ਲਾਉ, ਧਨ ਹੈ, ਸਥ ਹੀ ਇਨ ਕੋ। ³⁸

I am pleased to serve them alone,
no other service is so pleasing to my heart....
All that in my house is meant for them;
my wealth, my body, my mind, even my head -
are ever at their disposal. ³⁸

Not only that, Guru Gobind Singh enthused the down-trodden mass with a deep sense of self-help, self-respect, self-reliance; self-confidence and self-assertion, together with dignity and chivalry of the highest order. He awakened them to 'a new and noble life'; stirred 'their latent energies to a sense of common duty and joint responsibility'; blended the 'undaunted courage of the soldier with the enthusiasm of the devotee; and 'changed thereby the entire course of history'. ³⁹ He enabled the vanquished and the delibitated people to throw off the shackles not only of an oppressive tyranny of the foreign rulers but also of caste, creed, customs and superstitions which had been crushing them down the ages. So much so that "for the first time in a thousand years of India's history, the tide of invasions had turned westwards. This was nothing short of a miracle." ⁴⁰

Besides, he inculcated such cardinal virtues in them which exacted late on unusual and magnificent tribute even from a sworn enemy, Qazi Nur Muhammad, who accompanied the Afghan Army of Ahmed Shah Abdali (Durrani) on his seventh invasion of India in 1764. Writing about their many unique and enviable qualities, he stated as follows, on his return in 1765-sixty five years after their rebirth in the Khalsa order-for the knowledge of his countrymen :

"...The word **Singh** is their title which means a lion. Truly they are like lions and are courageous like lions in the battle-

38. Ibid. st.3. p 717.

39. Latif, **History of the Punjab**, op.cit., pp.161. 270.

40. Gopal Singh, **A History of the Sikh People**, New Delhi-1979; 2nd ed.-1988 p.326.

field. Listen another point in which they excel all other fighting people. They had neither the fear of slaughter nor the dread of death. In no case would they slay a coward, nor would they put an obstacle in the way of a fugitive..... In times of peace, they surpass Hatim Tai in generosity. They do not plunder the wealth and ornaments of a woman..... There is no adultery among them. They do not make friends with adulterers and house-breakers....."⁴¹

Writing about such Sikhs and Sikhism, mentioning some of its distinctive features and describing the dynamic changes brought about by the Nectar of Steel bestowed by Guru Gobind Singh on that red-letter day, Dorothy Field rightly observed in 1914 that:-

"This religion is also one which should appeal to the Occidental mind. It is essentially a practical religion. If judged from the pragmatical standpoint, it would rank almost the first in the world. Of no other religion can it be said that it has made a nation in so short a time. That it should have transformed the outcaste Indian-notoriously indolent and unstable persons-into a fine and loyal warrior, is little short of a miracle."⁴²

That, indeed, was a "miracle" which was wrought by Guru Gobind Singh, more than three hundred years ago, through the creation of the khalsa, "at the pleasure of God and as ordained by Him," as proclaimed by the Guru himself⁴³ and narrated also by a contemporary balladist as under:

ਗੁਰਬਰ ਅਕਾਲ ਕੇ ਹੁਕਮ ਸੋ,
ਊਪਜਿਓ ਬਿਗਿਆਨਾ।
ਤਥ ਸਹਿਜੇ ਰਚਿਓ ਖਾਲਸਾ,
ਸਾਬਤ ਮਰਦਾਨਾ।.....
ਇਉਂ ਤੀਸਰ ਪੰਥ ਰਚਾਇਨ,
ਵਤ ਸੂਰ ਰਹੇਲਾ।⁴⁴

41. Nur Muhammad, Qazi, Jangnamali, Punjab (Blochistan)-1765; discovered by Bhai Karam singh, edited & translated by Dr. Ganda Singh, Amritsar-1939, canto 41, pp.156-59.

42. Field, Ms.Dorothy. The Religion of the Sikhs. London-1919, pp.34-35.

43. Guru Gobind Singh. Dasam Granth Sahib. Apni Katha, op.cit., pp.73-74.

As per command of the Almighty
 The order of khalsa was established
 through an intuitive logical comprehension.
 It was perceived and created after thorough deliberation,
 Meticulous planning and due preparation,
 fully imbued with highly chivalrous spirit.

Thus came into being
 this brave third religion spiritually rated the Khalsa Panth...⁴⁴

The inauguration of the Khalsa and the formation of its Fraternity was, indeed, a great creative and revolutionary event in history which has no parallel in the religious, social, cultural and political spheres of the world. It proclaimed not only the realisation of Guru Gobind Singh's 'divinely inspired vision' but also of his lofty design to upraise the people who were being tortured and trodden under feet by their native higher castes, foreign ruling classes and barbarous invading hordes for a very long time.

It heralded as well the making of a commonwealth, out of such oppressed and down trodden millions, which grew soon into a great and distinguished community of God-conscious, self-abnegating, casteless and classless people, cherishing a living faith in God and selfless service of humanity.

It also laid the foundation of the system of joint leadership and joint responsibility in a democratic set-up through the institution of the Panj Piyare (the Beloved Five) and merger of the Guru's entity with that of his disciples. It fired them with such an intense faith and courage and infused them with such an invincible spirit of do or die that a new breed of men and a distinct people came into being. It also gave rise to an amazing impulse of chivalry and martyrdom, producing an endless chain of supreme sacrifices made by the entire family of its creator and thousands of his loved disciples while fighting the heaviest odds to protect the faith and defend the fundamental rights of the people.

44. Gurdas Singh, Bhai, **Ramkali Var Daswen Patshah Ki**, st.16; as included in Varan Bhai Gurdas, ed. by Giani Hazara Singh & Bhai Vir Singh, Amritsar-1911.

Moreover, it resulted in giving a decisive and irrevocable turn to the course of events, enabling the Khalsa to ride triumphantly into Delhi in 1783. According to Dr. Hari Ram Gupta, "The Sikhs made for the Red Fort (seat of the Mughal Government in Delhi) on March 11, 1783. The Emperor and his courtiers hid themselves in their private apartments. The Sikhs entered the Diwan-e-Aam and made.....Jassa Singh Ahluwalia sit on the throne."⁴⁵ They succeeded in replacing the Mughal regime by that of the Khalsa Raj in **Panjab** only a few decades after its founder, Guru Gobind Singh's passing away in the year 1708.⁴⁶

The effect and impact of that great miracle did not remain confined to the Guru's own times or upto the unparalleled success achieved by his Khalsa in uprooting the mighty Mughal Empire and establishing its own sovereignty in the Land of Five Rivers. It continued with added gusto after him too and is very much evident from the subsequent course of history. Having faced the Khalsa warriors, for instance, in two fierce Anglo-Sikh wars (1845 and 1848) and also having known them from close quarters, Captain J.D. Cunningham, author of its first-ever history in English, observed and described it thus in 1848, a century and a half after its occurrence:

"....A living spirit possesses the whole Sikh people, and the impress of Guru Gobind Singh has not only elevated and altered the constitution of their minds, but has operated materially and given amplitude to their physical frames. The features and external form of a whole people have been modified, and a Sikh Chief is not more distinguishable by his stately person and free and manly bearing, than a minister of his faith is by a lofty thoughtfulness of look which marks the fervour of his soul and his persuasion of the near presence of the Divinity....In religious faith and worldly aspirations, they (Sikhs) are wholly different from other Indians, and they are bound together by a community

45. Gupta, Dr. Hari Ram. **History of the Sikhs**, vol. III, New Delhi-1980, p. 166.

46. Irvine, William. **Later Mughals**, Calcutta-1992, vol.I, pp. 97-99.

of inward sentiment and of outward object unknown elsewhere.⁴⁷

The inheritors of that unyielding 'living spirit' have contributed no less, in recent times too, to the fight for the freedom of India from the British yoke and to the strengthening of its unity and solidarity after its independence in 1947 at a very heavy cost: as well as to the general welfare of all mankind (sarbat da bhala) for whose peace and prosperity the khalsa of Guru Gobind Singh has since been supplicating daily, in its individual and congregational prayers, at home and abroad.

Therein lies the unique importance of that unparalleled event and also the great significance of the continuing impact of that incomparable feat which was accomplished by Guru Gobind Singh on the Vaisakhi day of 1699,⁴⁸ three centuries ago, at Anandpur Sahib, the City Blissful of India.

The indomitable spirit, infused by Guru Gobind Singh on that memorable day and momentous occasion through the creation of the Khalsa, has, indeed, worked wonders during and after his life time.

It still "lives and possesses the whole Sikh people", as has been evident even in the unusual devotion, unprecedented fervour and extra-ordinary zeal with which the Tercentenary of that epoch-making event was celebrated all over the world, during 1999-2000, at the dawn of the 21st century and on the threshold of the 3rd millennium.

A vast and magnificent Khalsa Heritage Complex, designed by the eminent Jew architect, Mr. Moshe Safdie, as a marvel of heritage and modernity, is coming up fast at its hallowed site in commemoration thereof.

47. Cunningham, Capt. J.D., A History of the Sikhs from the Origin of the Nation to the battles of Sutlej, London-1849; reprint, Oxford-1918, p. 38.

48. Indian New Year's Day, that is on the first day of the month of Vaisakhi which is the first of the 12th months constituting the Hindu solar year. Vaisakhi is an age-old seasonal mid-spring harvest festival of the Indian subcontinent celebrated annually and enthusiastically in its North.

ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕ ਦੇਵ ਮਿਸ਼ਨ ਵਲੋਂ ਛਾਪੇ ਗਏ ਕੁੱਝ ਟ੍ਰੈਕਟ

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508		

ABOUT THE MISSION

Guru Nanak Dev Mission came into being in the year 1963 with the sole aim of imparting the message of Sikh Gurus to general public, and especially to the people of younger generation. With this end in view it provides reading material in the form of small tracts 10-12 annually. So far it has published 508 such tracts, mostly in Punjabi and some in English and Hindi. It is non-profit organization. None of its workers or executive members is a paid employee.

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For more information please contact :

DR. S.S. NANDA

Secretary

Guru Nanak Dev Mission
Academy of Sikh Religion and Culture,
1, Dhillon Marg, Patiala.
Phones : 215704
214738